

AGENDA ITEM V B 1

PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC/RESEARCH CENTER

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Board of Regents Guidelines: Proposed Centers, Institutes, and Other Similar Academic/Research Units provide two different review procedures for proposed new academic/research units, depending on the projected source of funding. For proposed units designed to oversee emerging research programs which anticipate the availability of non-state support, the Regents will consider a proposal for a one-year period of conditional approval, prior to submission of a full proposal. In June 2004, Regents granted one year conditional approval for a Louisiana Bird Resource Center (BRC) at Louisiana State University and A&M College. The institution has now submitted a proposal for full approval of the Center.

STAFF ANALYSIS

1. Description/Mission

The Center provides a critical mass of highly qualified ornithologists and related scientists who can prepare focused, interdisciplinary grant proposals to optimize Louisiana's role in significant environmental research with lucrative external support. As there is no formal structure for interaction among ornithology faculty in various departments at LSU, the BRC hosts weekly discussions on current issues in bird research and promotes joint research projects. Some of the projects and goals of the BRC are listed below.

- a. The proposal suggests that because of its location, landscape and year-round concentration of birds, Louisiana is a particularly desirable destination for bird-watchers and other eco-tourists. A properly developed infrastructure for bird-watchers, could attract millions of tourist dollars to the State annually. One purpose of the Center is to aid in development of a badly needed infrastructure required to attract these tourists.
- b. The largest current project is the Important Bird Area initiative, whose technical advisory committee is composed of representatives of the US Geological Service, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Nature Conservancy, the US Army Corps of Engineers, two Audubon Societies, and the US Forest Service, as well as LSU personnel. This huge project is run entirely from the BRC.
- c. Another coordinated project is the Winter Bird Atlas, which involves the Louisiana Geological Survey, the Louisiana Ornithological Society, various

birding clubs and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. While not yet formally funded, the project has already garnered much *pro bono* support from various state agencies and is prepared to begin its first year of data collection.

- d. Another goal of the Bird Resource Center is to promote awareness of the academic prestige in bird research uniquely tailored to Louisiana. The aggregation of respected avian scientists at LSU has graduated bird researchers employed in all major museums in the country.
- e. Development of an online database of nest records is well underway. Five thousand nest records have been donated by the Director of the LA Nature Conservancy; these data are being entered by students. The nest database will be the largest of its kind in the world. A bird sighting project is still under development, but it will follow a similar model.
- f. The Center is contributing to a handbook on *The Birds of Louisiana*. The author, who is the Curator of Birds at the Museum of Natural Science and a distinguished professor, expects to complete the manuscript in 2006 and publish this large volume in 2007. The project is funded by private donors at a level of approximately \$10,000 per year.
- g. Research for and publication of an atlas of winter bird distribution for Louisiana using the same scale utilized in the Louisiana Breeding Bird Atlas is an additional goal. A grant proposal for support of this project was submitted to the State Wildlife Grants program in 2006 with a request for \$200,000 in funding. While it was not awarded funding, faculty associated with the BRC will continue to submit proposals to facilitate the project and anticipates some additional revenues will be awarded.

2. Need

The establishment of the BRC has met a substantial need by providing a venue for collaboration and interaction among avian specialists throughout the campus and state. Interdisciplinary communication and research have been facilitated by the Center, which has provided an infrastructure for the assortment of information related to birds and birding in the State.

Conservation movements are underway to preserve portions of the State's ecologically diverse topography, including the Gulf Coast, the Atchafalaya Basin, pinelands and the Mississippi River valley. Preservation and/or restoration of these areas require basic scientific information on birds because of their roles as indicators of habitat health. Substantial federal monies are available for studies to collect this information.

Economic advantages of tourism focused on the State's abundance of birds has been recognized and supported by the Louisiana Tourist Commission, which is funding the establishment of the LA Great Gulf Birding Trail. Information provided by the Center will contribute to effective capitalization of those interested in viewing or studying birds.

3. Faculty/Staff

A tremendous strength of the Center is the associated graduate research and training program in ornithology and the academic respect the research group brings to the study and dissemination of information on Louisiana's birds. The Center's twelve associated faculty and other participants are drawn from the Departments of Biological Sciences and Entomology, School of Renewable Natural Resources, and LSU Museum of Natural History. Faculty and participants have been active and successful in publication and grant-related activity; several hold distinguished professorships.

The Center has a general coordinator, a doctoral student with extensive experience in bird "biopolitics" who is paid a graduate student stipend. He is assisted by an undergraduate student worker. His duties include but are not limited to:

Establishment of ties among bird-oriented institutions and groups within the state
Development of a website for interaction with the public and collection of bird data
Completion of *A Guide to Birding in Louisiana* with co-authors from the Louisiana Ornithological Society.

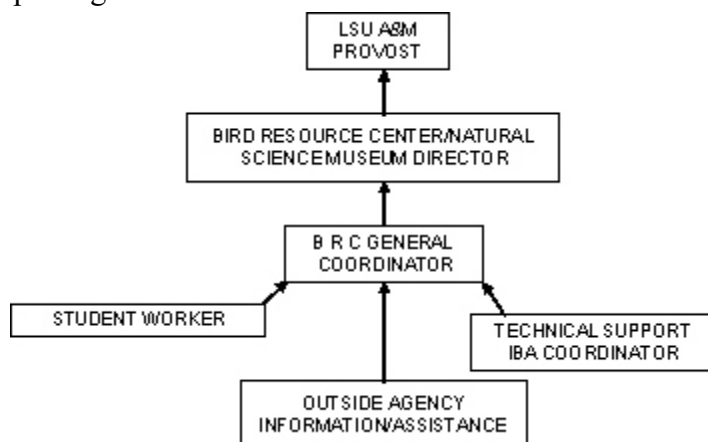
The Center also has an Important Bird Area (IBA) coordinator, whose responsibilities include identifying and promoting areas of Louisiana that are particularly important for bird-watching and conservation. She works closely with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries(LDWF) and bird-watching organizations. The IBA coordinator position is funded by a three-year LDWF grant as well as grants from the two Audubon Societies within the state

4. Facilities

The Center is located in 700 square feet of office space in the Museum of Natural Science in Murphy J. Foster Hall on LSU's main campus.

5. Administration

Information provided in the proposal and the organization chart in the LSU A&M catalogue indicate that reporting is as follows:



6. Budget

The Bird Research Center provided the financial information which follows.

Revenues (anticipated in italics)

	AY 2006-07	AY 2007-08	AY 2008-09	AY 2009-10	AY 2010-11
State Wildlife Grant A	\$ 54,000	\$ 54,000	\$ 54,000		
Audubon Society Grant	18,033	18,033	18,033		
Private Donations	42,000	32,000	27,000	\$27,000	\$27,000
State Wildlife Grant A				<i>54,000</i>	<i>54,000</i>
State Wildlife Grant B			<i>60,000</i>	<i>60,000</i>	<i>60,000</i>
Totals	\$114,033	\$104,033	<i>\$159,033</i>	<i>\$131,000</i>	<i>\$131,000</i>

Expenses	AY 2006-07	AY 2007-08	AY 2008-09	AY 2009-10	AY 2010-11
Tech Support IBA Coordinator	\$ 38,000	\$ 38,000	\$ 38,000	\$ 38,000	\$ 38,000
Tech Support Benefits	13,950	13,950	13,950	13,950	13,950
BRC Director (GA)	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Work Study Student	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Equipment	6,800	2,700	2,700	2,800	2,800
Supplies	3,900	2,400	12,400	2,900	3,400
<i>Guide to Birding in LA</i>	500	500			
<i>Birds of LA</i>	5,000	5,000			
Travel	5,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000
Totals	\$ 94,790	\$ 91,190	\$ 95,690	\$ 86,290	\$ 86,790

With current and anticipated funds, revenues appear to exceed projected expenses. The proposal states that in the event that the Bird Resource Center does not raise adequate funds to maintain a single employee, it would close the office temporarily until adequate funds are raised. Closure of the Center would be analogous to placing a research program “on hold” until further grants are forthcoming.

STAFF SUMMARY

The Center’s activities fall within the role, scope, and mission of LSU A&M. Need for the BRC exists; indeed, the Center could enhance the development of eco-tourism in the State. Well qualified personnel and faculty are present. Facilities and most equipment are available. Administrative structure and reporting lines are appropriate. Sufficient funds to cover operations are in-hand or anticipated; no state financial support for Center operations has been nor will be requested.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant full approval for the Louisiana Bird Resource Center at Louisiana State University and A&M College for a period of five years, effective immediately.